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by

Jacinto Santos

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

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Foreword

The theme requested for: Popular Participation in the Process of Development in Africa, is extremely vast. Hence, we have opted for known aspects and facts. As a result of our contacts and readings, it will be better to develop the theme in reference from studies of significant and specific cases in Portuguese-, French- and English-speaking Africa.

1. Concept of participation and its evolution in time

Popular participation in development, in its widest sense, its organization and implementation, can not be dissociated from the society. It takes place in given political, social and economic contexts and it is also closely linked to the various development models or concepts. Thus, an approach to participation must not be dissociated from the issue of development of present-day Africa.

For a better understanding of the concept we have taken, systematically, two aspects corresponding to two key periods in the socio-economic development of the continent, namely:

(a) The 1960s, marked by the independence of a large number of African countries. Since this period, and over the last 20 years, participation has been seen as an instrument for implementating official policies. Therefore, it concerns, fundamentally, a strategy for involving people, especially rural people, in the implementation of great national projects through the provision of voluntary labour in the setting up of infrastructures and in the development of projects. In this context, participation is seen as a necessary input for the implementation of projects with cheap labour, otherwise known as human investment.

This is the result of the concept developed on the basis of State functions and the organization of socio-economic activities. This all-embracing and great concept could hardly view participation as an effective means of making the African civil society participate in development efforts, thereby creating instruments and conditions for autonomous decision.

(b) The 1970s when, the second concept emanated, basically, as a consequence of the failures of the development policies adopted, policies which were and are responsible for the deterioration, inter alia, of the living conditions of the popular masses their "proletarization", the massive rural exodus, and food insufficiency. In the Sahelian region, the great droughts of 1970 to 1974 and the ecological deterioration allowed for a reactivation of development at the local and regional levels and for the establishment of autonomous rural organizations.

As a matter of fact, the budding concept is in disagreement with the first one, which is mainly utilitarian. Hence, in the implementation of State projects, participation takes the form of a process through which the people implement their projects, thereby establishing for themselves organizations and/or self-managed activities. Underlying this concept is the idea of responsibility, organization, autonomy, self-management and power.

The basic element of this concept is power. In fact, participation associated with structural transformation or with the redistribution of basic commodities requires the possession of authority, which is indispensable for an effective participation of the people. Therefore, the concept of participation such as the formation of power, constitutes a radical break with the traditional definitions adopted a long time ago.

Although researches on the problematics of power-focused participation are still at the developing stage. they have allowed for the definition of the following three major elements:

(a) The identification and organization of distinct socio-economic groups in the form of grass-roots social units;

(b) The process of informal education and of awareness: and

(c) The need for external aid, indispensable for power development and follow-up.

In conclusion, it can be summarized that participation is both a means and an end. Given the diversity of situations and participation in development, the context in which participation takes place and the underlying critical and philosophical concepts, the various attempts to formally define participation which are far from the universal concepts, reflect a great diversity both practically and conceptually. However, there is a positive development in the characteristic element of a new way of approaching popular participation with a view to enhancing the people's economic and social self-promotion. These elements concern the involvement of the people in all aspects of action organization and implementation, namely planning, implementation, management follow-up and assessment.

However, the fact is that it is practically impossible, today, to dissociate participation from the complex problem of development and from the political organization of society. However, in a wider sense, participation as a process of social transformation must positively influence the very essence of development.

2. Structures and implementation

2.1 Co-operatives

The co-operative organizations in most African countries, modelled after the Western ones, were organized as instruments for implementing official macro-economic projects. Above all, they serve as support programmes for the introduction of such modern agricultural factors as soil fertilization, fight against diseases and pests and soil utilization as well as the promotion of cash crops meant for export, to the detriment of subsistence crops.

Only very few co-operatives functioned as true instruments of self-promotion in the rural world during the 1970s. The role of the public authorities went beyond the mere establishment of activities, as such activities were directly carried out by State functionaries assigned to do so. In fact, the co-operatives were an extension of public enterprises or of autonomous State services.

The development of new systems of association in Africa was the result of the failure of the types of co-operatives that were previously introduced into the continent and how they were introduced. This change is not one of mere words but, indeed, was substantive, for the fact that associations now had a new perspective in terms of

objectives, structure and modus operandi. This new thrust was mainly inspired by the traditional forms of solidarity and mutual assistance and by the needs and priorities of the people.

Thus, various forms of specialized, multifaceted and territorial co-operatives have emerged. It will be boring to start citing the various types of co-operatives existing in the African continent.

In spite of the difficulties faced, co-operatives have played and still play an extremely important role in the provision of facilities to the low- and medium-income groups, both in the rural and urban centres (consumer co-operatives, village boutiques, and grain banks, etc.); in the provision of agricultural and animal production inputs linked to the cottage industry, service industries, co-operatives and associations; in the abundance of products from commercial co-operatives; in mobilizing local savings associations such as tontines, savings and credit banks and associations; in the provision of mutual social welfare and security; and in the development of human resources through educational and training associations and co-operatives. In 1988, a total of 116,443 co-operative organizations with about 36,548,530 members were enumerated, in 46 African countries.

The co-operative sector is gradually being considered as a structural element of development policies in Africa. In certain African countries, it is considered, constitutionally, as a kind of property, that is a specific sector of the economy; this is the case with Cape Verde. Although very different, the status conferred on the sector gives it an indispensable role to play in development both locally and regionally.

2.2 Community development

Community development is another development strategy or philosophy used in Africa. In the United Republic of Tanzania, where it is practised as village Ujamaas, community development is one of the fundamental elements of the socialist orientation of the economy. The same type of approach was used in Mozambique in the early days of independence. In Guinea-Bissau, during the liberation struggle, free zones were created in the form of local government. In French-speaking Africa, the local development associations were a renewed expression of community development.

Also, in the Anglo-Saxon world, community development was more widespread in the African English-speaking countries.

In the African French- and Portuguese-speaking countries, community development did not take the form of autonomous development due to the introduction of class structures and due to its dependence on State social structure; whereas in the African English-speaking countries, apart from the problems faced mainly at the socio-political level, community development programmes were more widespread.

In short, community development based on the community nature of the existing social structures in the rural African societies would have emerged as a way of enabling the local people to control and manage their own development among a complexity of problems affecting their community life within a given territorial context. On the other hand, community development also constitutes, in a way, an alternative model to the

traditional forms of co-operation, for the fact that it enhances and integrates the various traditional forms of co-operation within the local dynamics of development. One important example is the case of traditional groups (NAM) in Yatenga, Burkina Faso, supported by the association known as "SIX'S".

Certain studies conducted have shown that community participation has been positive in such areas of development as health, drinking water supply, soil restoration and conservation, provision of production infrastructures and of social and educational facilities.

Today, the main emphasis is on community management of the environment. In the Sahel, efforts are being made to find appropriate ways of enabling the people to control and manage their land. Each day, there is an increasing awareness of the fact that poverty is closely linked with the environment.

For example, CILSS in its new approach to the struggle against desertification and to protect the environment, which is a global approach, underlines the need for a greater control of local development under the micro regions as well as for a continuous sharing of responsibility between the local communities. Community development in the form of local development is expressed politically (decentralization), legally (recognition of local communities as a collective entity), in land use (solving of agricultural problems in the promotion of a more equitable access to land), approach-wise (discarding of former approaches for sectoral projects and for increasing development at the level of the villages and the local collectivities, with a view to meeting the overall needs of the people).

2.3 Self-help and development

The search for new forms of development in Africa is responsible for the emergence of local development structures rather known as local NGOs. Recent trends have shown that the local NGOs have been created to enable the African civil society to better resolve the current development problems and revelations which the State cannot solve. These NGOs, mostly supported by their European and American brothers, function as intermediate support structures to local development.

Apart from their assistance to the local and grass-roots participation structures, the local NGOs constitute an important instrument for mobilizing African technicians and executives for the struggle for a development capable of meeting the basic needs of the people, since the people are the major actors in this development process.

The local NGOs play a very important role in stimulating rural organizations. Their importance was mostly felt, inter alia, during the 1972-1984 drought, in war times and in environmental programmes. Apparently, it is generally agreed that participation of local associations in development is an absolute necessity in Africa.

3. Mobilization of resources

The financing of development activities based on popular participation is also from mobilized local resources in the form of labour contribution, material support and the

individual contributions of the communities and/or associations organized by the people. The highest forms of savings are the tontines and the savings and credit co-operatives. The collective camp is one of the major sources of collective self-investment. Citing only the examples of Cameroon, Mali, Rwanda and Kenya would suffice. However, it should be emphasized that most of the local development projects and actions are financed from external aid, especially the NGOs. For example, in 1986, in Cape Verde, about 22 per cent of aid from non-governmental sources was consumed by the co-operative sector.

If, on the one hand, assistance to projects continues to be needed on the other, it needs to be adequate both at the planning and implementation levels. There is a need to move from the stage of the small-scale isolated projects or from the financing of immediate action to local and sectoral programmes with a view and to creating a new local development dynamics.

This also means that popular participation in the process of development in Africa would be in the context of dependent and underdeveloped economics of development, thereby making the participative process more complex and contradictory. For example, how can one speak of autonomy of action and of operation of the local organizations when the implementation of their projects depend largely on external aid? Without misgivings, this is a contradiction that must be rectified given the fact that the principle of autonomy constitutes the essence of local social development.

4. Areas and activities

Popular participation in Africa involves the various sectors of socio-economic activities, which are numerous and very diversified. Participation activities are methodologically and simplistically listed as follows:

4.1 Rehabilitation and protection of the environment

Owing to the continued drought especially in the Sahel, soil degradation, internal migration putting greater pressure on land, deficiency of technical production systems, participation in the restoration of the ecological equilibrium is one of the major aspects of popular participation. Daily, the relationship between environment and poverty, environment and development, is a proof of the need for a greater involvement of the people, as the social actor, in the management of the environment.

Participation in this area implies, inter alia, the following activities:

(a) Soil and water conservation: afforestation through groups, associations, co-operatives and communities. This participation involves tree planting, maintenance and utilization and production of plants through nurseries set up by communities and associations.

The mechanical component of participation almost always involves the construction of dams, dikes, banquettes, barriers, reservoirs and similar projects. Normally, small water projects are carried out by the people. In most cases, the needed resources are mobilized directly through associations at the grass-roots level, self-help local organizations and State services in charge of liaison with the NGOs.

(b) Agro-silvo-pastoral production: the soil and water conservation exercise also aims at increasing the production and performance of the people. Hence, the exploitation of forest areas marked out for the State, communities and associations has allowed for increasing animal, fire wood and coal production in many African countries resulting in an additional source of revenue.

4.2 Introduction of goods and services

The participation also covers all stages of production in various fields of activities. The following are among the various forms of production organizations: groups, co-operatives, associations and collective community camps, in agriculture, horticulture and fruit production, examples of such productions are widespread in Africa, but in terms of fruit production the case of Guinea-Bissau fruit co-operative can be singled out as one of the major producers and exporters of fruits; for fish production, the Ghanaian co-operative movement can be cited; for the cottage industry, this exists every where; for industry, the network of urban co-operatives in Guinea-Bissau and the industrial ventures in Cape Verde are evident for carpentry, masonry, civil engineering and bakery; and for animal production, the case of the union of animal producers of Mali is illustrative.

In the area of services, participation is also active in Africa. For example, in Cape Verde, the network of consumer retail co-operatives regularly provide consumer goods for an estimated 18,000 families at low prices, which corresponds to 27 per cent of the resident population. Other types of distribution associations are all over the continent, namely village boutiques, cereal banks and consumer co-operatives. The provision of production inputs is also done by co-operatives and associations - the examples here are local multi-functional co-operatives and associations. As for marketing, the marketing co-operatives play an important role. Given the failure of co-operatives specialized in the marketing of such products as cotton, cocoa, and groundnut in various African countries, autonomous markets were created which enabled producers to better control products meant for sale.

A very important aspect of self-organized services is savings and credit. Here, it will be enough to cite the examples of Rwanda (people's banks), Togo (the savings and credit co-operative movement), Cameroon (the tontines and other forms of savings and credit associations), Cote d'Ivoire (the rural savings and credit banks known as CREP). The above provide services which sometimes go beyond the limits of their originally intended sphere, as was the case of the people's bank in Rwanda. There is an increase in the importance of popular credit mobilization, considering that African banks do not finance self-promotion activities at the grass-roots level. The small-scale rural producers hardly have access to the traditional credit institutions. The people's savings and credit associations provide financing for most family, group and community activities.

There is also participation in the collective utilization and management of production equipment and infrastructures.

4.3 Satisfaction of basic needs

In this area, it will be necessary to underline the major role played by the grass-roots communities and associations in the area of health, such as primary health care, organization and management of village pharmacies, development of traditional medicine and management of primary health units. The participation also involves the setting up of such installations as primary health units and health centres.

Drinking water supply, as a priority among major activities, is one of the areas that mostly involve the people given the difficult water situation, especially in the Sahel. Here, participation involves water fetching, storage and distribution.

4.4 Solidarity and mutual assistance in emergency situations

The communities and most especially intermediary associations, that is, the local NGOs have contributed significantly in the provision of food, clothing and medication to people displaced as a result of war, drought, hunger and other calamities. The cases of Mozambique, Angola and the Sudan, among others, readily come to mind.

4.5 Development of local resources

The various participation activities in this area are, above all, examples of development of local human resources through education. Furthermore, the development of local skills and professional training by the local participation structures are proof of the role of participation in intellectual development. It will be difficult to imagine popular participation in development without the development of human resources.

Development of human resources is closely linked to development of material and financial resources. Here, participation is through such participatory structures as the tontines, savings and credit banks, mutual social welfare and security, as well as through community contributions, and material and labour supply. This widespread practice of self-financing or local sharing results from the principle that participation must, first, be inspired by a local effort and a collective will to undertake actions.

5. Analogy of popular participation in Africa

Owing to the economic and social crisis in practically all African countries, these countries are now implementing structural adjustment programmes. The social consequences, namely decline of purchasing power and living conditions of the people is a proof of the need for a more appropriate identification of the current problematics of popular participation.

The problem is so preoccupying that it features in structural adjustment programmes and is described in the following terms:

> "The creation of rural institutions to encourage family and small-scale industries based on local technology, internal financing, development of rural infrastructures and participation of women; it also involves the making of specific legislations on the share and participation of the various socio-economic groups, such as the rural co-operatives, the artisans and the traders".

Apart from the points mentioned above, popular participation structures will be facing an unfavourable situation with regard to access to resources and to aid.

Therefore, under the present condition, it will be an illusion to speak of an effective popular participation based on internal financing, simply because the ability of self-financing is limited and may worsen in the future.

However, popular participation in development presupposes, inter alia, the following priorities:

(a) Strengthening and/or establishment of dynamic participation structures in order to encourage the emergence of an active and responsible civil society;

(b) Development of productive activities aimed at improving the performance and conditions of living of the people;

(c) Execution of actions aimed at satisfying such needs as drinking water supply, primary health care, literacy programmes and education;

(d) Fight against desertification, and environmental protection;

(e) Intensifying sensitization of the people so as to enable them to make greater use of their potential and to benefit more from their own system;

(f) Strengthening co-operation among grass-roots organizations with a view to creating a rural-focused network and movement;

(g) Professional and technical training within the associations and development programmes, aimed at enhancing technical, technological and organizational skills;

(h) Strengthening and/or creating self-help structures in favour of local development with a view to ensuring the necessary technical assistance, advisory services and training as well as the mobilization of additional resources, within the rural areas.

6. Conclusions

The first and major conclusion is summarized as follows:

(a) Participation is not a linear process as its forms of organization, types of activities, political and institutional contexts, are greatly diversified. Depending on the political context, the concept of participation and the social conditions in which it is carried out vary from country to country and from region to region;

(b) The efforts of the local people through spontaneous participation and modern structures, such as the local development co-operatives and associations, are becoming increasingly more important in Africa, both in production, in environmental protection and in improving the quality of life of the rural and urban populations. The impact of these efforts is increasing at the local and regional levels;

(c) From these two observations participation involves the following two fundamental dimensions:

(i) Education: this concerns, basically, the stimulation of a critical consciousness in the people with regard to their own situation and the context in which they live;

(ii) Policy: here, the aim is social transformation, that is, societal democratization through the expansion of social property and the redistribution of power and resources.

The second conclusion concerns the participative process itself. In fact, the participation intensity, its social scope, level of physical implementation, all of which depend on a combination of internal and external factors among which the individual and collective culture of the actors, the types of problems to resolve, the approach, the dimension of activities, the technological and organizational levels, the short-term impact, the stance of the public authorities and political organizations with regard to the autonomous structures of the population.

This complexity and heterogeneity of the participative process underlines the need to define criteria and indicators for assessing participation. This would require a methodological or scientific approach which would be very important for enhancing and implementing the concept of participation.

In this respect, some progress have been made. Almost all studies so far conducted have emphasized that an effective participation can only be possible if it actively involves the beneficiaries in the following phases of development actions: identification, planning, execution, follow-up and assessment.

On the other hand, recent researches have given us possible assessment indicators in each of the phases. Over and above formal definitions, there is a need for planning and for testing instruments. This would enable us to evaluate the effectiveness and forms of participation and the impact of activities undertaken.

Popular participation in development is not just a slogan, but an indispensable requirement for the current development of African societies and economies.

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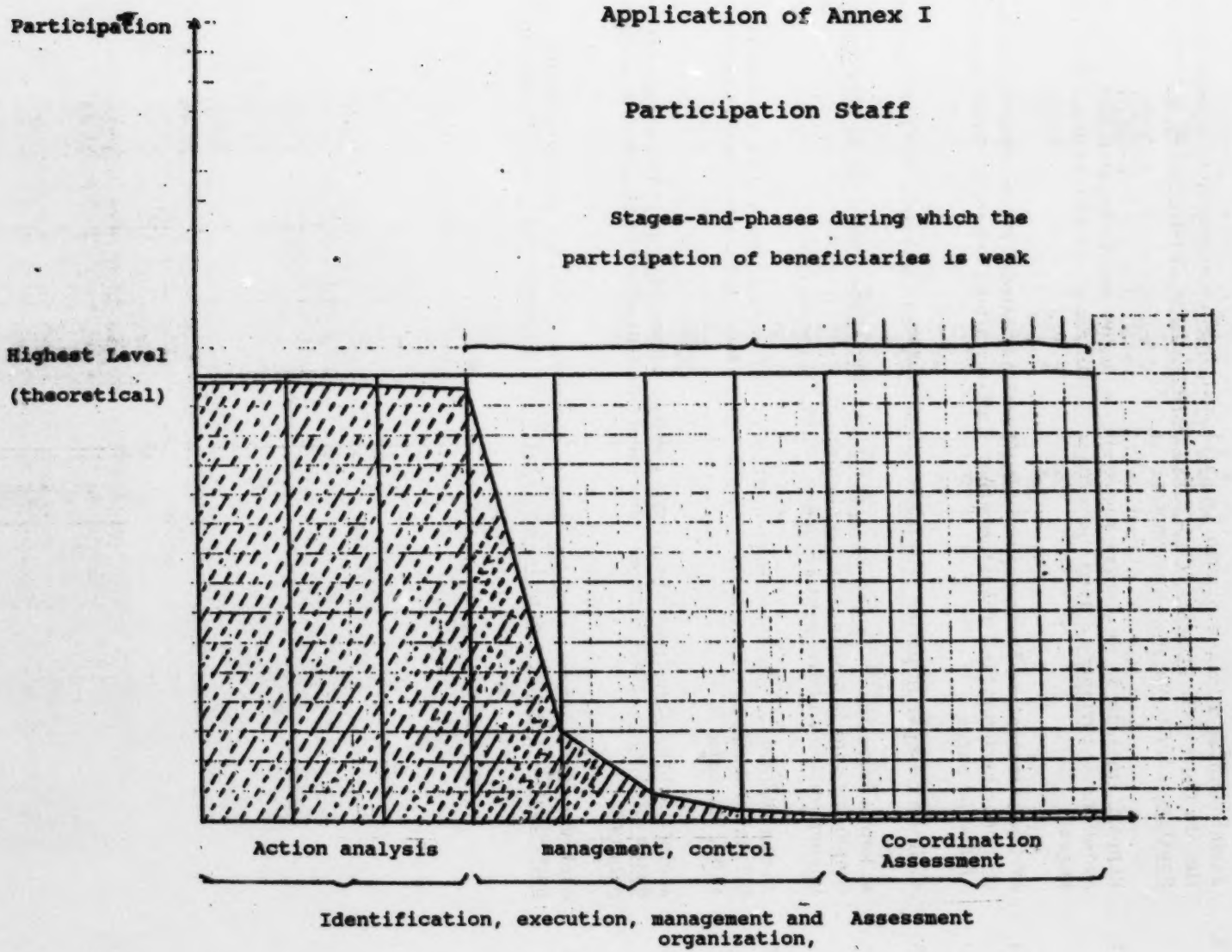
Application of Annex I

Participation Staff



SCALE OF ANALYSIS OF THE LEVEL OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Actors	Planning power					Financial power								Executing Power				
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
National support structures to development																		
Foreign aid to development																		
Village development organizations																		

Determinant role in the overall project

Determinant role with regard to an area of activity or a project locality.

Linked with the activity and/or decision-making

Where are the powers?

CHAPTER III

SCALE OF ANALYSIS

Planning power

1. Who takes the initiative? One or several institutions or individuals. This initiative can be through contacts aimed at the implementation of a new activity or through a demand for assistance for an action being executed.

2. Who leads? Leading can be by one or several institutions or groups of people playing a major role at all stages of the project.

3. Who expresses? One or several institutions or groups of people expressing a need or a demand for action, spontaneous or induced.

4. Who analyses? One or several institutions or groups of people who review requests made by the people concerned, be they specific classes of people in a community or institutions responsible for analyzing the situation in the area in question.

5. Who prepares? One or several institutions or groups of people processing data and compiling an initial project file (formalization of objectives, programme of activity, time-table and budget).

Financial power

6. Who searches? One or several institutions or groups of people who contact the potential sources of financing at the local, national and international levels, usually outside the area in which the project is located.

7. Who offers? One or several institutions or groups of people ready to finance all or part of the project, on the basis of an agreement of principle.

8. Who negotiates? One or several institutions or groups of people participating in the definition of the modes of financing and committing themselves by signing financing contracts.

9. Who engages? One or several institutions or group of people concerned who release and provide funds, equipment or technical assistance.

10. Who sets up? One or several institutions responsible for setting up the mechanism for the circulation and control of funds.

11. Who manages? One or several institutions or groups of people who control the mobilization of funds, equipment and material in the form of loans and grants.

12. Who controls? One or several institutions who examine the utilization of funds and equipment by means of budgetary and accounting control.

13. Who justifies? One or several institutions or groups concerned who justify the expenses made by the financiers and their subsequent follow-up.

Implementation power

14. Who programmes? One or several institutions or groups concerned who programme the physical and financial execution of the project activities.

Where are the powers?

15. Who executes? One or several institutions or groups concerned who physically implement the project.

16. Who co-ordinates? One or several institutions responsible for contacting, mobilizing and controlling the other actors outside the community in question; this co-ordination involves follow-up of the project.

17. Who evaluates? One or several institutions who defined the type of evaluation and the respective indicators. These co-ordinate, implement and lead the evaluation process.

18. Who trains? One or several institutions directly engaged in training and/or in planning training activities.

[redacted]

[redacted]

REPORT ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES THE CASE OF RWANDA

by

[redacted]
Senior Economist in charge of
AfDB/Afrec Project-making Project Services

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REPORT ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES THE CASE OF RWANDA

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Rwandese integrated development promotion association (ARDI), was invited by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa to prepare a paper on popular participation and access to resources and services. This paper shall be discussed during the International Conference on Popular Participation in Africa's Recovery and Development Process.

We are therefore very happy to make our modest contribution to the reflexions on a complex but rather interesting and captivating subject. It is a pity that the time allotted was very short. In fact, we received specifications on the topic to be treated very late at the beginning of December 1989 and had to submit the paper quickly to Addis Ababa.

However, we hope to furnish the interested reader with some food for thought on the subject to be discussed.

"Putting the people first" takes our minds back to the book. "Il n'est de richesse que d'hommes : investissement humain et qualité de la population" which earned Mr. Theodore W. Schultz, an American economist, the 1979 Nobel Prize for Economics.

Africa's greatest asset is its population. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to find ways and means of effectively utilizing their energy and creativity in favour of economic and social development (see the NGO statement made during the mid-term review of the United Nations Programme of Action for the Economic Recovery and Development of Africa, 1986-1990).

INTRODUCTION

Africa is, today, in the throes of various problems: debt, worsening terms of trade, under-developed socio-economic infrastructures, hunger, natural disasters, conflicts ... indeed, the list is endless.

Unfortunately, the main victims are the poorest of the rural areas and the urban preiphery. In a bid to find solutions to Africa's economic and social reconstruction, many people are increasingly recognizing the role of popular participation in the recovery and development of this continent.

It is in this context, that we propose that the subject of popular participation and access to resources and services – the case of Rwanda should be approached. For the purposes of analysis and convenience the areas for consideration will be outlined in three parts.

(a) The first part is on the current situation of popular participation, and on access to resources and services, and deals mainly with:

(i) The compulsory community work known as " Umuganda";

(ii) The major development projects;

(iii) The actions initiated by the grass-roots communities themselves;

(iv) The actions supported and/or initiated by the NGOs;

(v) The actions supported and/or initiated by the State; and

(vi) The current major economic and social development imbalances.

(b) The second part centres on possible solutions that would lead to popular participation in the recovery process through access to resources and services generated by or linked to development actions;

(c) The last part comprises is a synthesis of problems observed and an attempt to address the issue of what should be done.

I. CURRENT SITUATION OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

(a) Preliminary considerations

Here, we will be dealing mainly with the case of Rwanda which we ought to know best. We will also be using "popular participation" rather than "rural participation". In fact, the population of Rwanda is mainly made up of rural and agricultural people and therefore farmers accounting for about 95 per cent of the total population estimated at about 7 million inhabitants with an annual mean growth rate of 3.7 per cent.

The major notable trends are the growth rate of the population which will be doubling in 20 years and the consequent pressure on cultivable land. The current mean population density is about 250 inhabitants per sq. km. In certain areas of the country, the North-east for example, it actually reaches 800 inhabitants per sq. km. It should be noted that the country has a total area of 26,339 sq. km. Also noteworthy is the fact that more than 60 per cent of the population are young people.

Subsistence agriculture is predominant (bananas, beans, sorghum, green peas, maize, sweet potatoes and spuds). Subsistence farming takes most of the available cultivable land area (about 80 per cent). A look at the production structure shows a predominantly agricultural and subsistence pattern, with a highly developed mixed production. Each household produces almost all the food-stuffs it needs on an average farm of less than one hectare. Under the present conditions, it is evident that man's activity on land is reaching the limit (current annual rate of population increases at 4 per cent whereas farming is not intensive).

On the whole, production is on the decline when compared with the rate of population growth. This is borne out by government's recent call for international food aid following scarcity which has affected a sizeable part of the country. Major obstacles generally said to hinder Rwanda's development are:

(a) Scarcity of land, making it difficult to diversify production;

(b) Distance from the nearest Indian Ocean ports which are located more than 1,700 km away;

(c) Lack of natural resources, such as mineral deposits and petroleum;

(d) The high population density (250 inhabitants/sq km) with a high growth rate of about 4 per cent, resulting in an increasing scarcity of cultivable land;

(e) Lack of skilled manpower;

(f) A very narrow export base centred mainly on coffee which accounts for 80 per cent of export earnings, thus exposing the country to external factors which are difficult to escape.

Given the foregoing considerations, it is easy to understand the economic and demographic weight of the rural world on the national life of Rwanda. Thus:

(a) More than 90 per cent of the country's working population is engaged in the agricultural sector;

(b) This sector contributes about 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP);

(c) This same sector accounts for more than 80 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings.

About five years ago, a Rwandese economist drew attention to a paradox cited below which we consider still relevant today:

> "the farmer, with all his problems which will be examined further below, produces the bulk of the country's wealth ... but the paradoxically, in trying to ascertain what percentage of such wealth comes back to the producing population, it emerges that 90 per cent of the population receives 40 per cent of the country's wealth while 10 per cent of the population enjoy the remaining

60 per cent. This is just an inkling of the flagrant growth imbalance: there are still many others".[1]

The above shows the degree of rural participation or better still the form in development actions and benefits. Obeviously, rural participation should take place prior to and after any development activity, not forgetting the other aspects of the development process.

(a) The case of the umuganda community work

In 1974, some 15 years ago, the Rwandese authorities instituted a system of national community development work known as **umuganda** in the national language. Participation in such work was compulsory for all active and healthy members of the community. Once a week, civil servants, private sector workers, farmers, men, women and young people participate in this manual work, under the control of the administrative authorities.

This programme involves the execution of many different infrastructural projects such as schools, health centres, public buildings, rural roads, erosion control trenches, afforestation and coffee planting. As participation is compulsory, the best results are not generally obtained. In other words, participation is not maximized, for people participate mainly for fear of punishment. Moreover, considering the days devoted to this work each month throughout the country and the results obtained, it is clear that the loss of earnings is substantial.

It is, however, unnecessary to try to support the argument with figures when talking about the functioning of or results obtained from public services which are generally minimal. The idea that prevailed during the institution of this programme was laudable but, in the long term, seeing that it was an initiative coming from the top to the bottom, such a system does not always meet the priority needs of the people of a given region, especially as, in the case of **umuganda**, it is not the people who decide on the activities to be undertaken within the **umuganda** programme.

(b) The case of large-scale development projects

Many foreign small-and large-scale projects are going on in the country in the areas of agriculture, animal production, forestry and infrastructures such as roads, electricity and water. The large-scale projects are generally financed by organizations such as the World Bank, IFAD, ADB, EDF and FAD. Often, these projects are planned by governments and are prepared with the assistance of foreign experts sent by financing organizations. In no time, such experts assert the suitability of their proposals in countries totally unknown to them.

"During the drawing-up of each project, allowance is made for the consultation of local people but these exercise is not seriously conducted. What the people think cannot be known merely by holding a brief meeting with the local authorities. If anything, popular opinion can only be elicited and expressed painstakingly over a long period of time. This, however, contradicts the project organization approach which requires an initial elaborate document containing specific and quantifiable

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[1] Mugesere Antoine, "Le défi du développement rural" Dialogue No.103, March-April 1984, p.4-26.

objectives". [2] It is, therefore, easy to understand why popular participation in this type of project is out of the question.

Even when there is popular participation in certain aspects of the project, the local people are not fully integrated and do not show enthusiasm.

Many large-scale projects tend to cause confusion in rural areas; these are projects not based on knowledge of the environment and of the priority needs of the people. For example, although presently in Rwanda the commune, the autonomous administrative authority nearest to the people, is considered as the basic development unit, the project promoters in the area do not consult this body sufficiently. Finally, who are the beneficiaries of such projects? The major beneficiaries are:

(a) The financing organizations who, apart from investing their funds there, sometimes also have a hold on the economy of the receiving country;

(b) The foreign experts who enjoy such excessive benefits, as high wages and other financial advantages;

(c) The national executives who enjoy certain fringe benefits such as accommodation and transport allowance.

It is evident that the farmer is the big loser in such a situation, for by means of his farming, he contributes more to earning the foreign exchange which is used to pay for the projects in question and that constitutes the limit of his involvement. He is completely forgotten where he ought to be more fully and efficiently involved.

(c) The case of activities initiated by the grass-roots communities

There are a number of activities initiated by the grass-roots communities in the form of mutual aid and traditional solidarity. This involves groups sharing services or goods in turn, such as the construction of houses, transportation of sick people, communal farm work and savings and credit associations.

Generally, these activities are a big success and the people fully participate in them. An example of this is the tontines [3] practised in the Kivuye commune, in the North of Rwanda, where it is known as **Ibimina** in the national language. It is a farmers' thrift and loan association which operates under the principle of rotation. An amount of money is allocated to beneficiaries in turns. The turn of each member is usually determined by the degree of confidence the group has in him, his assiduousness as a member and the urgency of his expressed needs.

Ibimina meetings are monthly and are held in the home of the person receiving. Each beneficiary's turn is determined by consensus of the committee and its members. Each member must then participate fully and responsibly in the meetings. **Ibimina** is registered in the commune after the payment of a fee. Through such registration, these farmers' associations secure the recognition of the communal authorities.

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[2] Codding, Jien Pierre, "Grands projets et développement communal" Dialogue, No.134, mai-juin 1982, pp.3-15.

[3] Musabimana J.M. Vianney, Les inter-relations entre banques populaire et tontines, cas de la commune Kivuye-Ryumba. CF.R.C. - IWACU, Kigali, février 1986, pp.8-9.

It should be noted that **Ibimina** fulfills the farmers' expectations. In fact, several projects have been financed through it, such as house improvement and livestock and farm purchase.

In spite of certain difficulties and setbacks, these tontines are actively practised by the farmers. They play both an economic and social role.

There is no doubt that these farmers' thrift and loan associations, in which member participate fully, contribute optimally, within the limits of their ability, to the socio-economic development of their society.

The "Peoples' Banks" in Rwanda draw sufficiently on these local structures to establish themselves in the areas. It should be noted that the "Peoples' Banks" constitute the most rapidly-expanding financial institution in the rural areas. Its main objective is to mobilize savings in the rural areas and to grant loans to the rural agricultural and cottage industry sector. A "People's Bank" is a kind of thrift and loan co-operative. Presently, there are a little more than 100 such banks in the whole country.

It is worth mentioning that these banks were not started by the people although they were immensely inspired by them and operate, as much as possible, through participation.

(d) The case of actions supported and/or initiated by public authorities

According to a survey conducted recently by INADES - Formation Rwanda (a non-profit-making concern) and contained in a document entitled: INVENTAIRE DES ONG 1989, 143 NGOs are operating in the country. However, this inventory was not exhaustive, as it did not include co-operatives and parent associations that have established private schools. In the survey, NGOs were considered as structures providing any assistance or contribution to development in its widest sense, independently of what the government provides: national or foreign non-profit-making associations, religious bodies, foreign voluntary organizations duly recognized by agreement with the government. [4] The areas of operation of NGOs are very vast, but the most preferred areas are: health, cottage industry promotion, rural centres mainly for agricultural activities, adult education, teaching at all levels, social rehabilitation of handicapped people and orphans and the promotion of co-operatives and productive associations. The NGOs of Rwanda are concerned with four types of target population: young people, farmers, women and children.

It is necessary to look at certain grouping patterns and the horizontal dialogue of NGOs based on their areas of activity. There is, for example, the CCOAIB (the consultative council co-ordination of aid organizations supporting grass-roots initiatives). The members of this organization specifically direct their activities towards grass-roots people especially in the rural areas. Generally, the participation of the target population is the focal point of OAIB approach.

The Rwandese integrated development promotion association (ARDI), for example, especially encourage the full participation of the population requesting assistance. The intended result being the taking over and management, by the people, of the development actions undertaken. Generally, when the grass-roots population takes the initiative to carry out an action that will respond to a felt need and which

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[4] INADES -FORMATION RWANDA asbl et Banque Mondiale; Inventaire des ONG 1989, Kigali, 1989, p.134.

requires external support, in this circumstance support from an NGO, participation is considerable from the beginning to the end provided the assistance secured is relevant th NGO takes the socio-cultural factors of the area into account and honours its commitments.

In this context, examples can be cited of water supply or spring management schemes in which the people have been involved successfully right from the beginning up to the water consumption stage as well as in the maintenance of activities. However, in other cases, the people participated only at the execution stage of activities in conformity with the **Umuganda** work system. Maintenance of the water point is more or less taken care of by a person generally designated by the local authority. This usually happens when the population has not been consulted during the needs identification. Understandably, this practice does not go down well in the socio-cultural environment and is therefore not welcome. On the whole, it can be stated that actions supported and/or initiated by the NGOs tend to secure genuine participation.

(e) The case of actions supported and/or initiated by public authorities

Here, we are concerned mainly with social and health activities such as hospitals, health centres and nutritional centres, as well as training activities at youth training centres, community development and continuous training centres. The State establishes and supports many such social, health and economic infrastructured facilities. It should be noted that popular participation is centred mainly on construction project execution through the **Umuganda** system. But when it comes to identifying needs or planning such projects, popular participation is extremely limited. It is, however, not impossible, even if it can only be indirect and induced. It can be indirect through the representatives of the rural communities; and induced when the dialogue assumes that the rural communities are in a position to use certain rather technical facts.

Also, a close look at the way in which the rural populations benefit from this type of public service shows that the capital and other urban centres are given priority service. It is with vividness and perspicacity that Mugesere A. [5] describes the life in the countryside as "the difference in income levels between the city and the country-side, the mediocrity of rural life, the limited hope aroused by the traditional conditions of living, are the causes of the rural exodus".

It should, therefore, be noted that popular participation in activities supported and/or initiated by public authorities is limited. It is mainly involved in the execution of manual work; but in terms of planning, management and profit sharing, popular participation continues to be low and unbalanced.

(f) Current major imbalances in economic and social development

(a) Food

Apart from the current food shortage in the country, the people of Rwanda, in general, and the country folk, in particular, do not feed properly. The Second Five-Year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan, 1977-1981 estimated that qualitative undernourishment is almost general in the rural areas, and that poverty-linked illnesses are responsible for 75 per cent of deaths (Mugesera A., p.59).

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[5] Mugasere A., op.cit, p.14.

The third plan (1982-1986) estimated that 20 per cent of the population is permanently suffering from under-nourishment and malnutrition (Musegere P. 44). The frequently cited causes are:

(a) Scarcity and impoverishment of the soil;

(b) Climatic problems;

(c) Archaic farming practices;

(d) Under-nourishment of livestock, drop in dairy products and meat;

(e) Plant diseases;

(f) Fall in family income;

(g) Insufficiency of strategic stock;

(h) Eating habits that favour quantity at the expense of quality.

Antoine Mugesere in his already cited article adds:

"the countryside is delepleted to feed the city; it supplies the city with meat, agricultural, subsistence and industrial products and always ends up the loser."

Under such conditions, the farmers' priority is survival. Are the country's decision-makers and elites aware of this fact? Can popular participation be imagined outside these major preoccupations?

(b) Financial resources

It should be noted that agricultural activity is the source of revenue for most of the working population.

But then the farmer is poorly remunerated for his products. The difference between the cost of planting and harvest is enormous. He also loses in terms of weights and measures as well as in terms of increase in the price of imported products. He sells much more of his agricultural products in order to acquire other goods he needs. Besides, he has several financial obligations to face with his meagre financial resources; these are taxes, health expenses, school fees, various payments and family expenditures.

It should be noted that the granting of rural loan, especially agricultural loan is still insignificant, as the banks prefer to finance trade, construction, transport and industry. Thus, it can be stated that access to resources, especially financial is still difficult for the rural people who constitute more than 90 per cent of the country's population.

To be convinced of this, let us take a good example illustrating the case of coffee, extracted from Entraide et fraternité, Flash No.83-143 of 1 March 1983, whose ever convincing words are as follows: "... in 1981, the 500,000 producers of coffee only received 2.4 million francs or, on the average, 4.800 FRW each person, whereas the total amount of sale to the consumer was 11.2 million FRW. The share of the producing farmers amounted to 21.42 per cent of revenue from coffee. The remainder, 78.58 per cent or the equivalent of 8.8 million are shared among the numerous middlemen in the country."

The producer's price of coffee has remained practically the same since 1977 till date (120 to 125 FRW/kg) whereas inflation, resulting in a reduction in the purchasing power of the Rwandese franc, reached an average annual rate of 6.2 per cent, [6] from 1977 to 1986. It exceeded 10 per cent during certain years. The farmer's income is merely symbolic.

(c) Health care, training and information

Rwanda has made great strides in this area, although there is still a very long way to go. In the area of health, there are currently about 30 hospitals and approximately 150 health centres for a population of seven million people. Generally, these infrastructures, especially the hospitals, are much nearer the towns and urban centres in a proportion of 50 per cent, and so are secondary schools.

The imbalance in terms of how services are distributed to the rural populations should also be noted. There is a certain bias operating against the latter both in access to secondary and higher education and in medical and information services.

Special emphasis is laid on literacy programmes and access to information. According to the general census carried out in 1978, the literate population from the age of seven upwards was 60.3 per cent, while the literacy evaluation revealed that in 1987, the illiterate population aged seven years and above was about 44 per cent. These figures should, certainly, be taken with reservations, as the literacy level is yet to be agreed upon. At what literacy level can a person be considered knowledgeable enough to be able to learn to improve his standard of living? Nevertheless, it is clear that much remains to be done in this regard, in the rural areas.

The proportion of people who can read, count and calculate is still low compared to that cited above. Yet it is very difficult to combat ignorance and poverty with an illiterate population. It goes without saying that in this context, the circulation of written information is virtually non-existent in the rural areas.

(d) Women

Legally, men and women have equal rights and duties, as citizens. But, the majority of rural women in Rwanda live in near-total dependence on their husbands. In fact, it is the man who truly owns all household factors of production. He takes all the important decisions, especially in the distribution of the meagre family. However, the Rwandese woman, in her double role as wife and mother, has a respectable place in society.

For about 15 years, it has been observed that:

(a) The rural women participated in women or mixed associations that have been associated with development activities, such as agriculture, livestock and cottage industry;

(b) There has been an increase in the number of girls attending schools, particular secondary and higher;

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[6] Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, L'Economie Rwandaise, 25 ans d'efforts (1962-1987), Kigali, June 1987, p.214.

(c) There has been an increase in girls and women's involvement in income-generating activities, such as paid employment and petty trading;

(d) Generally, there has been some awakening in women.

On the whole, however, women's promotion has yet to be actively carried out, especially in the rural areas.

II. POSSIBLE WAYS OF STRENGTHENING POPULAR PARTICIPATION

(a) Preliminary note

In part I of this report, we tried to underline the role of popular participation and the people's access to resources and services; using certain illustrative cases, we were able to point out the major imbalances worthy of note. In the second part, certain solutions will be proposed. Such solutions need to be discussed, corrected and amended. We will be examining the following:

(a) Development-oriented education;

(b) Farmer's organizations and the participatory approach.

(a) Development-oriented education

This means an awareness of the world around us and an effort to transform it. In our opinion, development-oriented education is meant for the following two main categories of people:

(a) Individuals who already have a certain level of education and/or who have all sorts of responsibilities in the nation (politicians, civil servants, intellectuals and academics, school children ...);

(b) The common people (farmers, craftsmen, small wage earners and others).

The first category mainly concerns formal education and extra-curricular training.

The formal training consists mainly of academic courses which must be sound, realistic and suitable. Presently, there are distortions in the teaching programme, affecting them negatively. The various school reforms that have become widespread in our countries have significantly reduced, the quality of academic training as they have not been sufficiently prepared and discussed in national debate. It would therefore be necessary to analyze this sector and to try to give greater importance first to the quality of teachers and then to the programmes and facilities to set up. Should graduates be recruited on the basis of their individual performance, everyone will his own quota. Extra-curricular activities mainly concernthe working population. This has to do with further training, involving public speaking, and debates on themes of national interest. It is felt that this type of education will increase professional and general knowledge and will go a long way to inculcate the spirit of patriotism and democracy.

The second category composed mainly of the rural world needs leadership training. Here, such training should promote awareness, provoke reflexion and empower the people to assume responsibility for their own development.

"Rural leadership training means helping rural folk to identify their problems, to look for the root causes and to make concerted efforts to find solutions to them." [7]

Is this really possible?

The problems are well-known. They are food, health, childrens' schooling, purchasing power, ...

Who should assume the leadership role other than the country's elite? It is certainly necessary for these elites to be aware of this necessity and to participate in supporting the rural people. We believe that popular participation should be a priority in our countries.

(b) Farmers' organizations and the participatory approach

Since the benefits of development will not fall like manna from heaven, the farmers must organize themselves to secure them. [8] It is clear that farmers cannot solve their problems on their own. It is necessary that the farmers should first take cognizance of their situation so as to be able to organize themselves in order to defend their interests.

For the rural world to be developed, the people first have to be organized. When the people form such organized groups as producers', sales and buyers' groups, they are protecting themselves. But such organization of the rural people so that they can participate more fully in decision-making, project execution and self-management, will only become possible when the country's elites, who are assumed to be knowledgeable, are with the people. The participatory approach to serving the people, especially rural people, is to be initiated with the assistance of intellectuals committed to such a noble cause.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The thinking on popular participation has revealed a host of problems. We have observed a series of obstacles and inadequacies mainly: decision-makers who do or do not consult the target populations concerned: the projects, big or small which operate without involving the so-called beneficiaries; the few cases in which the people are invited to participate, are those of project execution; paradoxically, whereas it is they who produce the bulk of the wealth, they have always lost in all respects with regard to food, access to financial resources, health services, training and information, not to mention the relegation of women to a secondary role.

Certain positive points have however been noted: when the initiatives are taken by the rural people themselves, they participate fully and achieve much. Everything, including activities supported by the public authorities or NGOs, move smoothly.

As for possible solutions, we have noted that:

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[7] Mugesera A. op.cit., p.19.

[8] Mugesera A., op.cit., p.19.

(a) Development-oriented education should include not only academic and extra-curricular training but also rural leadership training. In other words, it is necessary that our States should make substantive investments, more intellectual than material. It will also be necessary for intellectuals to associate with the people in order to help them develop themselves;

(b) Farmers organizations cannot be initiated without the support of the committed elites.

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SAVINGS AND CREDIT CO-OPERATIVES AS A MEANS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE: THE CAMEROONIAN EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamism of any country's development depends on the capability of all its socio-economic forces to assume responsibility for their future and to work continually at becoming the creators rather than merely the endurers of the events that they have to live through.

The economic problems that the world is facing and which sub-Saharan African countries are experiencing have in no way spared Cameroon. The country's critical situation is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Indeed, the declining value of exports attributed to the deteriorating terms of trade has created a balance-of-payments deficit while external and domestic debts have attracted an unbearable ratio of debt servicing. The well-known inadequacy of private and direct investment flows has resulted in a significant reduction in the volume of transactions.

On the whole, the crisis has generated a decline in the financial turn-over of businesses, lay-offs and negative growth which has to be managed. It has also brought about a deterioration in the climate of confidence arising from the uncertainty of payments and the increase in economic risk premiums which are weighing heavily against the sovereignty of the country. What is more, the State's disenchantment at its unfruitful attempts to make the public sector manage affairs has resulted in resounding and very costly failures. Oversized industrial production units have been closed down either because the equipment was out of date or the technology unsuited to local conditions and was in any case highly expensive, among other things. Those plants have made financial losses and many subsidized parastatals which were social- rather than business-oriented have performed badly.

Until fairly recently and three decades after achieving independence, the development of Cameroon (a country of about 10 million people, 63 per cent of them rural, with an urban growth rate of 6 per cent per year and an economy in which agriculture accounts for 70 per cent of GDP) was virtually the preserve of the Government which was helped by petroleum revenue accruing from the major oil boom of the 1970s and especially, export earnings from such cash crops as coffee, cocoa, cotton, hévea, and timber not to mention indirect and compulsory savings accumulated through taxes and various customs duties.

Given the poor economic performance nation-wide, the need was felt for a greater variety of production sectors to contribute to the restructuring of the national economy. It was urgent that this be done resolutely and dynamically. Therefore, as the State withdraws from the management of economic and social services and restrictive accompanying measures to structural adjustment policies are imposed directly and indirectly on the people, they are mobilizing themselves actively in order to survive. The ingenious, innovative and industrious efforts being made by rural folk and by people working in the urban informal sector attest to such mobilization.

Whatever be the case, the virtually widespread discomfiture of several banking institutions of the country only goes to intensify the mistrust and skepticism in which the policy measures relating to these financial institutions are held. More than in the past, people are hesitating to entrust their savings

to those institutions. The fact is that currently in Cameroon, the modern financing system has been brought to a standstill. This refers to development banks such as the Banque camerounaise de développement (BCD), the Fonds national de développement rural (FONADER) and the Fonds de garantie à la petite entreprise (FOGAPE) ... which have been sidetracked from their essential mission of assisting farmers and small- and medium-scale enterprises and are now lending to the well-off households in the major towns and to civil servants. All these banks have virtually ceased to function as lenders. Deposit banks that are branches of old European banks are well-versed in purely commercial transactions. They simultaneously function as lenders through letters of credit and their deposit structure shows the relative weakness of long-term deposits which are perceived as unrepresentative of the actual worth of the currency (see LELART, 1985, p. 61). They therefore prefer to finance short-term loans through sight deposits and this is the reason for their high interest rate. What is more, only those cash crop export and semi-finished product import activities meant for manufacture in import-substitution benefit from such support. Currently, the commercial banks have far too many bad risks to run. Their refinancing difficulties seem to be solved only with the injection of private funds. This means that their recovery is fairly compromised. With the effort to make them financially sound and to rehabilitate certain businesses, some of these financial institutions are already going under at an alarming rate.

Therefore, popular participation in socio-economic development through savings and mutual loan co-operatives such as the Caisses populaires (CP) and tontines are manifesting themselves as an expression of the process of broad economic democratization open to various production groups operating in the formal and the informal sector. These non-governmental associations, together with all the small craft guilds in the slums, in a word all those people through whose efforts the country currently survives, have proven that theirs is the only scheme that is workable. The collective responsibility to be assumed in order to bring Cameroon out of the impasse is to bring every able-bodied and enterprising person to commit themselves to the challenge of developing the country so that all the social strata would be educated on the ultimate need to make their contribution to the effort in a manner commensurate with their ingeniousity, availability and creativity brought to bear in implementing strategies that should be properly co-ordinated.

All the same, it would be worth recalling that popular participation in a financial sense does not play a substantive role when compared with State power because it obviously appears to be insignificant when the small projects it can generate for national development are considered. And yet, the State cannot easily allow groups of people over which it exerts no pressure to escape its control in carrying out large-scale activities. The establishment of the Banque unie du crédit (BUC) in 1975 is a case in point. People made individual monthly contributions of about CFAF 7 million according to HAGGBLADE (1978) 1/ within the framework of a savings association now defunct. Also, even those individuals capable and desirous of promoting major projects can be prevented by the lack of democracy in how national social structures operate and this curiously, in spite of the goodwill elsewhere expressed in public statements. For this reason people might refuse and fear to participate in the mobilization of substantial private sector savings and when there is no massive savings and no intensive

capital formation to be reinvested in a country, it may be wondered how that country will fully develop in a genuine way.

Right from the outset, therefore, the constraints and limitations of popular participation (commendable as it may be) will need to be defined. For the working masses, this is an important undertaking which would enable Cameroon to face the rest of the world. If the process becomes a practically residual operation because it has negligible and hardly quantifiable impact then no purpose is served. Africa in general and Cameroon in particular would seem to have become increasingly marginalized because African manufactures have no place in the world economy. Even their natural resources and tremendous wealth in minerals currently count for little because the financial value of money has greatly diminished while the cost of such services as research and development in terms of consultancy, advertisement and other product promotional activities, in brief, all those factors of the product environment which guarantee it considerable added value, remain completely outside our control as we trail the rest of the world. The current economic game in high-level technology, research and study has left Africa far behind and without a say in these areas that will determine the future. At the same time, all those sectors in which African countries have invested heavily (raw materials for example) are experiencing falling prices on the world market and an enormous gap in terms of the manufactured products made out of them and which African countries have to buy at higher cost.

1. At the political level, Africa has not been able to lead the debate of ideas which should bring about comprehensive solutions to the crisis situation because it lacks organized structures. Once an operation has been carried through, it fails to be linked to a whole set of others which are equally necessary if the results achieved are to be lasting and realistic. This is Africa's development challenge and the solutions advocated could do with constant monitoring by commissions set up to assess how much ground has been covered and what remains to be done.

2. With regard to the mobilization of informal savings to finance low productivity operations and the unsuited nature of traditional banking to address local situations, the allocation of personal loans and credits under risk control conditions for purposes of genuine development for the majority of citizens as actors and beneficiaries poses a problem because the strategies and machinery that would be required have yet to be formulated. To date, statistics have hardly been able to evaluate the scope of such informal savings in spite of the many studies conducted. It is therefore recommended that:

(a) Administrative structures should be reformed with a view to setting up democratic rules of the game for everybody. In this way, along with small village and community low-income projects, private people commanding more substantial capital can freely and actively promote development as one harmonious and well structured endeavour which brings two currents to a point of convergence. The high-performance small-scale units set up by the majority of the active population would be transformed into intensive production units under proper control and this would benefit the entire population at various levels;

(b) All initiatives taken in aid of socio-economic development should be encouraged through a range of incentives that the State would institute with a view to becoming a facilitator of private sector activities with particular reference to small- and medium-scale enterprises at the same time as the State relaxes its control over production and distribution. Manpower, which is another important wealth of nations, should be allowed to develop within an environment where its performance as an essential agent of development is given back its proper value;

(c) All the structures for financing operations should be assessed in order to determine which mechanisms and modules best promote access to credit for various development agents. Efforts to place the banking system on a sound footing and to strengthen it the better to serve as an investment institution participating as a partner in risk-free ventures should be pursued so that, within the medium term, a positive growth rate can be achieved. At the same time, thinking should be brought to bear on the various mechanisms and modules of a financial brokerage system that suits the Cameroonian environment and takes into account all the informal savings already mobilized while avoiding over-regulation and expecting that, with time, more appropriate solutions will emerge.

A. Savings and credit co-operatives or people's banks

In Cameroon, these institutions operate in various ways and appear to be the best way to date of securing community participation in the socio-economic development of the people. In this category can be found people's banks or groupings of various co-operatives that have been formed from grass-roots communities and tontines that are diverse in their collection and lending networks. More recently, the community savings and investment fund (CCEI) has emerged on the scene to provide investment banking services that the traditional deposit banks have failed to provide to date. The clientele of the deposit banks excludes a majority of local prospects comprising small- and medium-scale industries and enterprises because nationally, at the micro-economic level, bank lending is based on a concept of risk which is inappropriate to the environment. The banks finance the capital needs of a minority of civil servants or individuals in the private sector who have immovable property (land title deeds or buildings) that can be mortgaged or used as collateral in the sense that risks should be compensated for by genuine guarantees 'that often do not exist or are far less in real value).

Moreover, many of the administrative costs involved in opening loan files encumber the process of assessing the brokerage costs particularly when the loans requested are small in amount because they are meant for financing current expenditure in the consumption of durable goods or, in other cases, to pay for food or schooling. What happens, in fact, is that such customers are provided a low-cost service in terms of brokerage but for which they end up paying (according to BOTTOMLEY in 1975) &/ a price that is very high when compared to the performance achieved for similar volumes of lending granted by informal institutions.

Because of all these difficulties which impede, frustrate and dissatisfy various segments of society in their dealings with the major financial institutions, people have strengthened their informal associations which are more

easily accessible and flexible community savings structures. Obviously here, the volume of deposits depends on that of income and property in addition to which there is the personal dimension of working relationships.

Several types of savings and credit co-operatives have performed creditably. Some of them are reserved to an exclusive category of membership (slum women, farmers, peasants, craftsmen and youth co-operatives like that of Nylon). Some of the co-operatives have a membership belonging to a specific group which may be a village, trade union, professional association like that of the traders of Nylon, cab drivers and carters. The co-operatives may mobilize capital through specific methods either by payment of a lump sum (people's bank) or by regular deposit (mutual credit association) or yet again, through the subsidies of such development agencies as local NGOs formed by grass-roots people and the majority of whose loans go for the purchase of equipment and goods and for trading activities.

There are also two significant networks, namely:

(a) People's banks which operate in very unequal fashion and are grouped in one national league administratively. The case of the Nylon People's Bank (CPN) in Douala will be considered in some depth as a successful example of peoples participation in socio-economic development;

(b) Next will be tontines and their many variants: revolving fund or credit savings plan and rotary credit/savings associations.

The role of CPN and its socio-economic contribution as an example of popular participation in development

The pilot project of the Nylon Peoples Bank started off with the broad education of members on the concept of regular savings contributions of a nominal amount of CFAF 2,000. Such a savings co-operative was set up in 1975 and like all the others established in Cameroon, operates under legislative act No.73/15 dated 7 December 1979. Administratively, it comes under the co-operatives and mutual assistance department of the Ministry of Agriculture. In fact, however, it seems to be operating very autonomously and has currently been well-controlled internally over the last three years. It was born out of the free association of people wanting to pool their savings however meagre, in an initially under-privileged and very poor area of the town of Douala. The objective was to grant members, upon request, loans that would enable them to produce, hedge themselves against accidents and to secure housing. It would be proper to recall that as the economic capital of Cameroon, Douala attracts many migrants from within the country who live the countryside and whose basic concern is to secure housing. This simple exercise is all the more difficult at a time when the economic recession has further reduced the prospects.

According to the statements of Sister Marie Koumi, the project management authority and leader, CPN enjoys the highest credibility in Douala and operates under the co-operative principles of freedom to join and to resign as a member, democratic management (one man, one vote), limited interest rates on savings and proportional distribution of any surplus or dividends. Any grass-roots associations seeking housing loans could become members as could youth and

traders co-operatives of the "Madagascar market", craftsmen, scrap iron dealers, embroiderers, schools, parents associations and sporting clubs. Membership may be in an individual or collective capacity. CPN provides various savings and credit services:

(a) Housing loans for building or renovation by helping with the purchase of a plot of land or the building and enhancement of individual houses;

(b) Education grant loans to help individuals prepare for the reopening of school for their children through a savings plan which may be structured for individuals or for parents associations;

(c) Starting capital loans given through CPN assistance to young people going into business. This may take the form of start-up loans with support and assistance from the Nylon Youth Co-operative;

(d) Support to young traders and craftsmen by underwriting loans that members of a co-operative secure from financial and banking institutions. Tiding-over loans may be granted in order to sustain operating funds at the same time as assistance with procurement and supply management is provided.

It should be pointed out that because all these people do not have solid guarantees or regular income, they would never have hoped to secure the smallest loan from a traditional bank. In contrast, this system makes for the allocation of loans to people organized in grass-roots associations of 25 to 100 persons who meet every week. The group provides a structure from which savings can be mobilized because each member brings in a contribution. In practice, loan applications are prepared by each group and submitted to the housing committee which evaluates the seriousness of the group. The people's bank then decides whether or not to grant the loan which the group, as a whole, guarantees to repay. It would be worth singling out the crucial factor that accounts for success of the system. The corner-stone of any structure which brings group pressure to bear on the individual is the sanction of excommunication should one fail to play the game by the rules.

As for the Nylon Youth Co-operative, CPN works closely with it in order to ensure that young people are integrated or reintegrated into social and economic life. This is done by supporting those initiatives that promote the mobilization of their savings into productive ventures and ensuring that their future financial capabilities are strengthened in order to enable them to expand their operations.

SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PEOPLE'S BANKS

The headquarters of the League of Co-operative People's Banks in Cameroon is located in Bamenda. The League had the following statistics:

Year end	1969	1971	1980	1984	1985	1987	19--
Membership	4,000	14,000	41,197	53,016	58,604	62,476	70,---
Savings in CFAF millions	16	892,33	82,338	5,328	6,493	8,866	10,---
Lending in CFAF millions	10	501,626	1,626	3,677	4,584	6,369	7,---

Source: National League of CPC, Bamenda, 1988.

The above figures show the overall situation of all the CPCs currently existing in five of Cameroon's 10 provinces. Since CPC operations vary from one structure to another, some of them seem to be functioning very well and are generally located in the North-western province where the relevance of co-operative credit unions is based on a favourable cultural heritage which has nurtured them to fruition and growth and raised the standing of the CPN in Douala. The figures did not show loan repayment rates which would have made it possible to quantify the degree of satisfaction with services rendered. Nevertheless, the conditions for the success of these operating CPCs demonstrate that development cannot be merely led by the State or directed by appointed bureaucrats without in some way involving the beneficiaries. The fact is that the savings of all members should be invested in the economy in such a way as will satisfy their choice and need for autonomy.

The mobilized capital of small-savers (CFAF 10 million in 1988) could contribute in no small measure to some of the invenstment that national economies need. What is more, the basic principle which universally governs such people's banks is hinged on the concept of co-operation and its key values of equality, equity or social justice and mutual assistance with the objective of human development in brotherhood. It is also true that mankind is the most important agent for development, innovation and change.

Indeed, among the savings and credit co-operatives or people's banks, those which are operating well have certainly demonstrated their capability and potential for making substantial changes in the social and economic life of millions of Cameroonians. By eliminating financial middlemen, they have made it possible to mobilize substantial volumes of personal savings which are redistributed in small loans that make it possible to attain productive and relevant goals of the community. The members have, in this way, been able to set up new businesses or to expand those already existing. Small farmers have been able to procure improved seeds or fertilizer, petty traders have been able to increase or to replenish their stock while small-scale workers have been able to buy new equipment.

It is gratifying to note that, through the people's banks, member families have been able to receive funds that have enabled them to solve their health, educational, housing and other problems. The social impact of being able to meet such basic needs has been tremendous for these people.

Furthermore, the concern of the CPC is to provide the members of peoples banks with trainer training so that they can in turn train a greater number of people and secure in this manner, a transfer of the credit supply know-how and techniques they received at seminars and workshops organized to train them in management skills. Under the slogan of strength in unity, savers (who are also potential borrowers) are being trained to set up successful, well-managed businesses. The work of the people's banks is defined not in terms of profit but rather in terms of services rendered to members who borrow at a monthly rate of 1 per cent.

The people's bank also acts as a co-operative which provides a place to save and deposit regular savings that are managed independently in village and other communities. Once the interest has been collected, the surplus is distributed to members in the form of a 6 per cent per year rate of dividend. Obviously, the money collected is deposited in a commercial bank while leaving the people's bank a liquidity ratio of 25 per cent in ready money.

The League of People's Banks has instituted a loan insurance scheme which frees any member who dies, from debt. There is also a risk-management programme for repaying loans on which data are regrettably lacking. This goes to show what deficiencies exist with regard to securing access to such an important element for evaluation. It leaves rooms to suppose that benevolence has its shortcomings and that, worse still, the money saved and lent does not enter the circuit of a productive financial market.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SAVINGS AND CREDIT CO-OPERATIVES

In general, this is defined as a system in which all the component parts endeavour to work together at sustaining the welfare of each member. In fact, the vital importance of savings is a key element of the people's bank system which makes members to pool their own capital through savings, in contrast to what happens with a traditional bank.

Savings represent a financial hedge of security against personal emergencies which take the form of medical or financial crises. It makes for greater independence and freedom of choice and action since the deference of the use of funds immediately makes it possible to use it later for other options. In this case, the decision making is not hastily compelled by an urgent economic necessity. Through savings, constructive activities which make a difference in the lives of individuals, families or societies become possible both for citizens and for the country.

Without resources accruing from savings, the risking various options in order to improve the quality of life or to dispose of surplus resources for investment in new undertakings such as the aquisition of new selected seeds at Sanguere in the Northern Cameroonian region of Bénoué (to be tried during the next farming cycle) could hardly have been possible. Nor could an extra sewing machine have been bought to make better dresses to sell. Such new equipment was needed to improve agricultural production and the distribution of produce through vehicles that provided access to new markets. It could also not have been otherwise possible to secure better education to change-life styles. What is more, savings become productive, that is to say of service to others and the

community when brought out of their traditional hiding places (under the mattress or behind the brick wall) and injected into the economic life of the community. Through such monetization, the mobilized savings which would have remained unproductive with certain members of a given community are put to use in financing the needs of others. This generates interest through the dividends payable on deposits, promotes investment and improves the living conditions of people's bank members and their families since a country develops faster when it depends first and foremost on the mobilization of local savings.

The peoples banking system can therefore stem the syphoning of rural resources or funds from less economically active areas to the principal towns or monetary centres of the country. When the peoples bank operates properly, this could contribute to improving the quality of life in those areas and slowing down, if not actually reducing, rural-urban drift.

B. TONTINES

It is generally acknowledged that the tontine movement which has been observed in various societies of Asia, North America, South America, Africa and Europe goes back a long way and has identical ways of operating throughout the world. Whether of Chinese, Philippine, Bamiléké, Bafia or other origin, there are few distinctions in form and history confirms that the Savings Loan Associations, the Caisse populaire canadienne referred to as "Des Jardins" are nothing but outcomes of the evolution of initially mutual credit and assistance movements.

The tontine and development promotion

In fact, with regard to formal credit systems such as the banks and other financial agents, one notices many informal groups such as non-profit-making family associations called tontines which are neither corporate nor legal bodies, given to savings collection and simultaneously to unofficial lending activities accepted by the Cameroonian Government.

This unorganized financial market, as U.Tun Wai called it (1977), 3/ existed before the establishment of commercial banks and other types of public credit institutions. Certain speculators have even remarked that official banks would collapse should their usual tontine associations decide to withdraw their bank deposits, as unofficial credit associations keep the savings of millions of country and city dwellers in Cameroon, Central and West Africa (Bouman, 1977). 4/

The financial adjustments carried out by these associations seem to be in order, contrary to the theories of Kumar (1983) 5/ who, although noting the importance of adjustments in the financing of economic activities, does not include them in his representation of the financial aspect of the growth models proposed to least developed countries.

In truth, informal savings play a major role in the economic development process in Africa, for it is mainly a system used for economic solidarity aimed at mutual assistance (Lelart, 1985, pp. 60-64). 6/

The principle of solidarity among participants

The informal savings/credit market appears to be an instrument of social integration, as membership of a mutual credit association brings together households of the same ethnic group, irrespective of differences in levels of contributions received. The educative objective of these meetings are explained by the learning about savings which becomes easier when practised collectively, better organized, and when it raises, a priori, the confidence of members who are often from the same clan, ethnic or professional group. Also, savings and credit associations are forums for economic discussions, sources of information on social life (Desroche, 1983, page 32) 6/ and more generally an instrument of social control (Keo, 1985, pp. 17-18). 8/

Thus, by integrating persons both economically and socially, tontines help to reduce the social inadequacies of certain individuals in a community, thereby serving as a determinant factor of structural and functional cohesion in the society, that is, it is an instrument of social control.

The economic destination of informal savings/credit flows

Savings and credit flows from tontines are used for financing production as well as final demand. The aspects of production activities financed include agricultural equipment, land and livestock, both for families and private enterprises and for craft guilds . In the rural areas, current production financing covers such operational costs as that of seeds, while in the urban area it covers wage and tax payments.

In Cameroon, the growth of the domestic distribution trade depends on resources from tontines (Toumi, 1987). 9/ Informal lending funds are increasingly needed more in the urban areas than in the countryside (Mirage et al, 1980). 10/ However, the wide range of non-rural activities financed by such savings include the construction of roads in built-up areas, classrooms, clinics and the establishment of small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in towns. As for demand financing, the numeric data in Cameroon, are limited in quantity and apart from the financing of new houses, child education received more funds than current consumption even of durable goods and prestige ceremonies such as payments for dowry, wedding or funerals. All this has led the local agents to improve their attitudes towards informal savings resulting in the rapid proliferation of such associations in Cameroon.

Types of credit collection networks

There are two types of credit associations:

1. Mutual tontines

These are associations based on co-operation at the family, professional, clan and ethnic level for the purpose of mutual assistance and economic solidarity. The allocation of the contributions from each of the members (about 50 in all) to one of them, at a time, is made in turns following the established cycle. An additional fund is set aside as security. The regular collective accumulation of savings supersedes individual savings in importance. Such credit associations are generally common among women.

How women's credit associations function

These are diversified and vary in accordance with financing needs such as children's school fees, purchase of cooking utensils and other domestic articles, house-building and establishment of a business.

Furthermore, the irregularity of womens' income, especially in the rural areas, affects their net savings and forces them to adopt a diversified strategy for obtaining loans by forming strong solidarity and mutual associations not based on loan bidding or on saving deposits at given regular intervals. Individual contributions are held up for a long period; they are gathered together during each round and lent to a beneficiary following a pre-established order. Thus, the first recipient gets an interest-free loan and the last, savings with interest. In between, the other participants take turns becoming debtors and creditors, with an interest rate ranging from 5 to 10 per cent. At the end of the year, dividends accruing from the interests of all the members, based on the volume of individual contributions and taking into account the dates of payment and the contributions themselves, are repaid to the depositors. These associations which are exclusively composed of women provide a variety of funding sources. Nevertheless, because the proportion of women heads of family is much higher in rural areas and about 50 per cent in urban centres, their family responsibility is heavier.

Furthermore, there is a paradox between the central role of women in production and the poor income received from their activities. In urban centres in Cameroon, the female labour force is concentrated mainly in the service sector, involving distribution of primary agricultural and general food products, as well as in small family businesses or restaurants, hair-dressing salon and beauty product SMEs. All these activities face stiff competition from formal enterprises normally controlled by men and, in addition, suffer from customer instability. This situation reduces considerably their ability to expand and their efforts to increase their participation in and contribution to informal enterprises, resulting in their switching over to form solidarity unions to raise funds and acquire equipment through tontines organized as schemes for lending and assistance. Such credit associations bring together millions of country and urban dwellers resulting in a mix-up of the various social classes.

In short, the funds obtained by women from solidarity institutions should be considered an important means of mobilizing peoples' savings with a view to integrating the informal network into the formal sector.

II. FINANCIAL TONTINES

This is made up of businessmen and businesswomen, traders, wage earners and executives of enterprises operating more strictly in consonance with the principles of simple and compound interest loans. In fact, the interests received on funds loaned are shared at the end of each cycle in small and large portions or in a single bulk allocation. Interests yielded by the capital are immediately deducted and the capital re-offered for bidding and decision. Depending on the size of the interests, profits may be freely shared.

The association is composed of people from the same area, that is, of the same administrative district or members with about the same status who must be well-off, respected heads of family who should be sponsored or should provide a co-maker that can repay the loan in case of non-payment of the borrowed capital plus interest. The loan is short term, generally one to three months, and is to be used for productive projects: the borrower is required to state its purpose. It has a triple advantage over that from the traditional banks in that the real sums received are more; participants can receive substantial short-term loans often meant for clearing containerized goods through the customs at the port or for purchasing a fleet of utility vehicles or still, as private capital for starting a business or trade-all of which are so many activities that contribute to development. Furthermore, members of tontines are encouraged to continuously increase their deposits since they will not only recover their savings but will also earn a wider range of interests than they would from official savings banks. Therefore, such membership not only secures benefits on the savings of depositors, enabling them to cover huge costs, but more especially makes for financing productive investments in areas such as real estate, trade and distribution, hotel business, services or industry (this latter, however, being less frequent). These tontines provide for a quick mobilization of savings with practically no financial brokerage costs. Its scope can be measured in terms of the fact that a large number of financial needs involving all types of businesses are covered.

III. POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE TONTINES AND RELATIVE INEFFICIENCY OF TRADITIONAL BANKING

The role of financial brokerage in economic development has exercised the minds of authors such as Tchudjang Pouemi who wrote on the subject in 1980. 11/ In the case of Cameroon, the essential observation made on analyzing that role is the strong correlation often established between the dualism of the production system and the scarcity of lendable funds. The issue provides food for thought. If informal interest rates very often seem to be prohibitive, can they provide an efficient mode of financing and if the timing and spacing of an industrial activity are incompatible with lending operations which extend over three months at the maximum, given the fact that interests are immediately deducted from sales, does this substantially reduce the scope of the exercise? Finally, do tontines generate a substantial money supply enough to support development on a regular rather than on an ad hoc basis? What is the current capacity of tontines to mobilize savings and what is the most appropriate system of socio-economic development financing that would be people-sustained? Would this be the banks, the tontines or the people's savings and credit banks? Many studies have been conducted on this issue by institutions such as the African Development

Bank and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. No solutions have yet been found but an analysis of the situation opens the following debate.

The exercises conducted in order to restructure and place the traditional banking sector on a sound rooting are significant indicators of the malaise and instability they experience in terms of the relationship between financial savings (essentially more of a question of liquidity than one of quasi-money going by the definition of savings assets considered) and interest rates.

The informal sector which finances all sorts of activities, both systemic and underground, for a given rate of interest, drains the savings of millions of households and other economic agents while traditional financiers depend on this same informal sector for their deposits. The banks are not adapted to the local context, as they can not see how risk-controlled individual loans can be offered to increase deposits. The result is competition in savings collection and complementarity and specialization in terms of credit allocation, a phenomenon which today characterizes the dualist financial system in Cameroon.

IV. A STRATEGY FOR ENDOGENOUS SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Unstable borrowing costs have a double impact in that they affect business financing and also make it more difficult for financial brokers to come together. On the other hand, the integration of informal savings is one of the most enabling strategies for pursuing autonomous economic development.

Recent trends in interest rate have placed Africa in the ranks of regions with the highest informal borrowing costs. According to WONG (1977), 12/ the costs are up to 60 per cent in rural areas. Even occasional borrowing is very expensive in Africa with 100 per cent interest rates being charged on the average by solitary or usurious lenders. Furthermore, even though informal financing promotes business dynamism in the informal sector (NGAN NGAN, page 63), 13/ the inherent investment difficulties at the general economic level can not be over emphasized. The informal lending market is characterized by the fragmentation of loan money supply into a host of associations not always pursuing a common goal and usually operating in isolation (MacKinnon, 1973). 14/ Nevertheless, the vital role of the informal associations in development financing is indisputable. Due to the substantial decentralization of the market, especially the infinitesimal volumes of money supply, it is difficult to co-ordinate plans for lending to remunerative ventures that could promote investment. Despite low unit production costs, entrepreneurs only manage to make net surplus savings.

Informal savings appear to be increasingly involved in financing low-productivity activities such as trade and distribution, where surpluses are invested in imports and seldom in industrial production.

Having noticed the crucial role of the informal sector in savings collection, institutional means of involving it actively in real economic activities should be sought. All the same, its continued role among the communities that established it should be maintained.

Finally, there is the need for a new legislation on savings, which should specify the legal status of all savings/credit associations, with a view to creating a system of financial brokerage that would be truly suited to the needs of the developing Cameroonian economy. This would lead to greater participation of the people in the community.

FOOTNOTES

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BUILDING ON THE INDIGENOUS

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We cannot significantly advance the development of Africa unless we take African societies seriously as they are, not as they ought to be or even as they might be; that sustainable development is never going to occur unless we build on the indigenous. Now, what is the indigenous and how might we build on it?

The indigenous is not the traditional, there is no fossilized existence of the African past available for us to fall back on; only new totalities however hybrid which change with each passing day. The indigenous refers to whatever the people consider important in their lives, whatever they regard as an authentic expression of themselves. We build on the indigenous by making it determine the form and content of development strategy, by ensuring that developmental change accommodates itself to these things, be they values, interests, aspirations and/or institutions which are important in the life of the people. It is only when developmental change comes to terms with them that it can become sustainable. Thus sustainable technological development occurs only when the innovative technology is totally localized and assimilated into the life of the people, when the people see its relevance, accept it and even make it an expression of their creativity by refashioning it according to their changing circumstances.

Implications

This is all rather obvious. However basing development on the indigenous makes a great deal of difference, indeed it leads to a development paradigm radically different from the prevailing one. What difference does it make?

First, it will lead to a democratic and participative development simply by giving primacy to the interests, values and aspirations of the people at large. The prevailing paradigm of development in Africa suffers from relying too much on coercion and authoritarianism; this arises from conspiracy between African leaders who are using force to maintain power in the face of vanishing legitimacy and development agencies who see their development paradigm as scientific and objective and therefore calling for no doubt, no dissent and no negotiated consensus.

Political authoritarianism and coercion has cost Africa dearly for it has contributed in no small way to the failures of African development. To be specific, it has led to the dissociation of development from social needs. The social base of power and decision-making has been too narrow and decision-making has been dominated by interests which are too narrow and often in conflict with public good, hence the disassociation of development from social needs. Authoritarianism has demobilized the people by making it virtually impossible for their interests to register in public policy. African leaders are unable to mobilize the people's energy and support. They have succeeded only in compelling their conformity and in the course of doing this have forced millions of people into a silent strike against their policies. Coercion has brutalized African peoples to an extent that is highly detrimental to their sense of efficiency. As African leaders keep uselessly busy coercing everyone to accede to the numerous demands of their self-serving policies, e.g., changing their patterns of consumption and production, forcing them into "consolidated" villages - they have undermined the peoples traditional capacity of coping in their difficult environment.

Second, the notion of building on the indigenous will help to correct a situation in which development has become a process of traumatization and alienation. This situation arises from the fact that the prevailing development paradigm has pressed the distinction between developed and underdeveloped societies into a dichotomy between good and bad. The underdeveloped societies of Africa are treated as though they have neither validity nor integrity and may be violated at will. Their validity lies in repudiating what they are in order to be reconstituted into something new and better. The task of development is no longer how a people might move forward on its own terms given all that it is, but how it might be transformed by other people in their own image of what they consider it ought to be. From this perspective, development becomes an exercise in self-alienation and humiliation.

The psychological injuries arising from this are easy to see. The confidence of African leaders have been undermined. They no longer act, they merely react, accepting submissively every development fad from the centre - export promotion, import substitution, structural adjustment, whatever - and abandoning them just as soon as the next fad comes along. We have been criticizing them for not bringing about development, but we must now consider whether development was ever really on their agenda, we must wonder whether they ever had the audacity to seek development which is as truly heroic undertaking. All we see are signs of diffidence and self-contempt: easy options thoughtlessly and cheerfully chosen, unshakable belief that other people will bring redemption. Then there are the bizarre manifestations of insecurity: an African Head of State tearfully calling De Gaulle father, trying to recreate the splendour of long-forgotten and better-forgotten French monarchs; African leaders forbidding the speaking of indigenous languages, the wearing of African traditional clothes in Parliament, etc. There is a problem of confidence, and development calls for consummate confidence and high seriousness, something which the prevailing paradigm does not encourage.

Third, the notion of building on the indigenous will help us to avoid assuming that the indigenous is never conducive to development and pressing capitalist rationality too far in African conditions. The prevailing paradigm is notoriously hostile to everything indigenous. For instance, it spurns the communal tradition of African people presumably because communalism retards social automation and the transition to a market society. It is conveniently forgotten that communalism is highly functional as a proxy social security system. Primary group loyality is disliked as a regressive form of consciousness impeding the development of efficient rational-bureaucratic structures. But we do not see that it is the basis of the ethnic associations that have contributed immensely to the development of rural Africa. The household economy elicits hostility because it is oriented to the law of subsistence rather then the law of value and to reproduction rather than production. And yet it is the quintessential expression of those things which we want the national economy to become. It provides a very model of self-reliance, internal balance and autocentric dynamics which we should be reproducing at the national level.

Fourth, the notion of building on the indigenous is the necessary condition for self-reliant development to which there is now no alternative. The evidence is in, dependent development has failed. Its failure is manifest in the deep and protracted crisis in Africa and the rapid collapse of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD) as well as Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER). To all appearances, the failure is irreversible. This is because of certain changes in the world economy such as the increasing dematerialization of production. So it will have to be self-reliance, after all.

When the choice is reduced to self-reliance, when the people become the end and the means of development, their interests, values and aspirations necessararily determine the content, strategies and modalities of development. So much for the general implications of building on the indigenous.

Operational significance

It remains to show the operational significance of building on the indigenous; this cannot be done fully here, only sketchily, by way of illustration. To begin with, one important significance is that we have to de-emphasize those factors which are monopolizing our attention today: the debt crisis, commodity prices, the balance of trade, levels of development assistance and foreign investment, structural adjustment. To be sure it is desirable that the unfavourable turn of these factors be checked and reversed. However, it is a mistake to give them the highest priority for they are only symptoms of an underlying pathology. Not so long ago, these factors were not so unfavourable and yet Africa did not quite flourish. If they are improved today Africa is unlikely to advance very much and may conceivably slide back again.

What needs to be done is to place emphasis where it should have been all along, namely the regeneration of the grass-roots where there is still some vitality, before the rot gets too deep. To regenerate the grass-roots, we have to localize development. Without prejudice to the need for some bigger national projects, the emphasis has to be placed on smaller projects developed and executed in an entirely participatory manner and relying mainly on local resources. It is only when development is localized and democratically controlled that it can be consummated - by becoming the right of each and the responsibility of all. It is only then that is ceases to be alienating, acknowledges our moral autonomy and truly enriches our humanity. This is easier said than done. There are immense obstacles to the operationalization of the notion of building on the indigenous. They are not economic but rather political. The major problem is political resistance. It comes from African leaders determined to maintain their control and from ambitious and cynical nations attending to their self-aggrandizement under cover of developing Africa. The overcoming of this resistance will be a decisive break-through and it must be regarded as a major item on the development agenda.

It remains to indicate what all this means for development agencies. For these agencies, the notion of building on the indigenous will entail drastic and painful adjustments. They will have to learn to suspend belief in the superiority of their knowledge and their values. They will have to think in terms of much smaller projects developed and implemented democratically and this will be maddeningly messy. They will have to curb their penchant for instant gratification which lures them to invest in the so-called productive sectors as opposed to the social sectors. They will have to make it clear that they are assisting peoples, not States or governments.

These adjustments will throw up significant contradictions which they will hopefully confront without being squeamish knowing fully well that they must get immersed in political struggles which will create problems for them at home and abroad. In getting involved with the development of Africa, they are interfering with vital social processes in any case, they might as well interfere usefully.